

REMARKS

No new matter is added by this amendment. The present application was filed on September 12, 2003 with original claims 1-140. By this amendment, claims 39 and 108 have been amended. The claims remaining in consideration are claims 39-40, 43-47, 49-54, 108-109, 112, 114-116, 118-123, 141 and 148 of which claims 39 and 108 are independent. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The examiner objected to claims 39 and 41. Appropriate correction has been made.

Claims 39-40, 43-47, 50-53, 108-109, 112, 114-116, 119-122 and 141-148 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,511,377 issued to Weiss (Weiss) in view of U.S. Patent 6,227,972 issued to Walker (Walker).

Independent claims 39 and 108 have been amended to remove an unnecessary limitation.

Amended independent claim 39 sets forth a method for crediting a player of a gaming machine with bonus points. The method includes the step of establishing a player account for the player. The player account is stored in the computer coupled to the gaming machine and has an associated player account number. The method further includes the step of providing a database for storing electronic vouchers in a list separate from the player count, assigning the first number of bonus points to a first electronic voucher. Each electronic voucher has first and second parameters and is a separate electronic record stored in the list in the database. The method defines the first parameter of the first electronic voucher as being one of cashable and non-cashable and the second parameter of the second electronic voucher as being an expiration date of the first electronic voucher. The method further includes the steps of assigning the first electronic voucher to the player account by storing the player account number associated with the player's player account in the first electronic voucher, allowing the player to convert at least a portion of the first number of bonus points as credits, downloading the converted credits to the gaming machine, and allowing the player to play the gaming machine using the downloaded credits. The method further includes the steps of creating a second electronic voucher containing the converted credits after the player stops playing the game and assigning the second electronic voucher to the player account by

storing a player account associated with the player's player account in the second voucher if the first number of bonus points were defined as non-cashable. The second electronic voucher has a first parameter and a second parameter, the first parameter of the second electronic voucher being defined as non-cashable and the second parameter of the second electronic voucher being defined as the expiration date associated with the first electronic voucher. The method dispenses credits to the player after the player stops playing the game if the first number of bonus points were defined as cashable.

The method of independent claim 39 also includes the steps of allowing the player to convert at least a portion of the first number of bonus points to credits and responsively redeeming the first electronic voucher, downloading the converted credits to the gaming machine, and allowing the player to play the gaming machine using the downloaded credits. Lastly, the method of independent claim 39 includes the steps of creating a second electronic voucher containing the downloaded after the player stops playing the game and assigning the second electronic voucher to the player account by storing the player account number associated with the player's player account in the second voucher, if the first parameter of the first electronic voucher was defined as non-cashable, the second electronic voucher having a first parameter and a second parameter, the first parameter of the second electronic voucher being defined as non-cashable and the second parameter of the second electronic voucher being defined as the expiration date associated with the first electronic voucher and dispensing credits to the player after the player stops playing the game, if the first number of bonus points were defined as cashable.

In independent claim 39: (1) the vouchers are electronic records, (2) the vouchers are stored on the list which are separate from the player account, and (3) the vouchers are assigned to the player account by the storing of the player account number of the voucher, i.e., electronic record. According to the MPEP, "[a] claim is anticipated only if each and every element is set forth in the claim as filed, either expressly or inherently described, in the single prior art reference." MPEP §2131. As detailed below Weiss does not include each and every limitation of amended claim 39.

Weiss teaches a cashless gaming system which stores an established player accounts in a player database 62. Each player account may have stored therein: cash chip balance, marker balance, player point balance, and promotional balance. However these values are stored directly in the player account. For example the specification clearly states that the “cashless gaming system 10 includes means for awarding bonus points directly to the player’s electronic column...”, column 12, lines 60-63. Weiss does not include a list of vouchers, i.e., a list containing electronic records, which are separate from the player accounts. Additionally Weiss does not assign an electronic record, i.e., voucher, to a player account by storing the player account number of a player account within the record, as required by independent claims 39 and 108. Thus as claimed and shown in Figures 3 and 4, the present invention is embodied in amended claim 39 includes a player account and a list of electronic vouchers or records, where each voucher includes a number of associated bonus points and each voucher is associated with the player account by storing an associated player account number therein.

Furthermore, if the first electronic voucher was defined as being cashable once a player has finished playing, all of the credits are available to the player and thus may be dispensed to the player, e.g., as tokens or uploaded to the player’s account as credits.

However, if the first electronic voucher was defined as non-cashable than the credits may not be dispensed to the player. In the further amended claim 39, once the player is done playing a second electronic voucher containing the converted credits is created on the host computer and stored on the host computer in the player’s account by storing the play account number associated with the player’s player account in the second electronic voucher. The second electronic voucher has a first parameter and a second parameter. The first parameter of the second electronic voucher is defined as non-cashable (since the corresponding bonus points in the first electronic voucher were designated as non-cashable) and the second parameter of the second electronic voucher is defined as the expiration date associated with the first electronic voucher. In this manner, both the first parameter, i.e., the status of the bonus points as being non-cashable, and the second parameter, the expiration date of the bonus points/credits is preserved.

Weiss makes no such teaching or suggestion of the electronic vouchers as claimed (as discussed above) nor the ability to preserve the non-cashable status or the expiration date of the bonus points/credits. Specifically, Weiss does not teach that electronic vouchers are stored separate from the player account as required by independent claim 39. By keeping the electronic vouchers in a separate database or table, this allows information regarding the outstanding vouchers to be indexed or searched much more quickly than if they were stored within the player accounts. Additionally, changes may be to a large number or bulk of vouchers much more quickly if they are in the same table. Otherwise at least one additional step needs to be performed to identify all of the relevant vouchers.

In Weiss, a cashless gaming system **10** is disclosed. The cashless gaming system **10** allows a player to open an electronic account (see column 8, lines 32-43). Promotional values can be posted to the player accounts (see, e.g., column 12, lines 18-30). In the outstanding office action, the Examiner states that Weiss includes the step of providing a database which stores electronic vouchers in a list separated from the player account (see page 4, lines 6-7). Applicant, however, respectively disagrees with the Examiner.

Specifically, the Examiner references several cites several passages in Weiss, including column 9, lines 20-54 and states “data regarding voucher information for the player is stored electronically in a group account as part of a combined list of voucher data, which is separate from data stored the player account [sic] that lists the player information” (page 4, lines 10-13).

This is an incorrect reading of Weiss. In Weiss there are two different types of accounts: player accounts and groups accounts. The player accounts are individual accounts which include player identification information and promotional information. According to the specification, a “group account allows the casino to group multiple permanent and temporary player cards together as a group.” (Column 9, lines 20-22). Thus, the group account includes a plurality of individual accounts (see column 9, starting at line 30, which identifies the player information in a group account). Promotional dollars may be added to the group account, but the promotional dollars are added to each individual player account in the group account (see, e.g., column 9, lines 22-26). Thus, applicants respectfully assert that,

contrary to the Examiner's assertion the promotional information in Weiss is not separate from the player information.

The Examiner utilized Walker to show the use of a second voucher. However, Walker does not overcome the deficiencies of Weiss.

Since neither Weiss nor Walker include each and every limitation of independent claim 39, applicants respectfully assert that the §103(a) rejection is improper and must be withdrawn. Claims 40, 43-47, 50-53, and 141-144 are ultimately dependent upon allowable independent claim 39. Therefore for the reasons set forth above, and based on their own merits, applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 40, 43-47, 49-53, and 141-144 are also allowable.

Independent claim 108 is an apparatus/system claim which mirrors independent method claim 39. Therefore, for the reasons set forth above, applicants respectfully assert that Weiss does not include each and every limitation of independent system claim 108. Therefore applicants assert that the §103(a) rejection is improper and must be withdrawn. Claims 109, 112, 114-116, 119-122, and 145-148 are ultimately dependent upon allowable independent claim 108. Therefore for the reasons set forth above, and based on their own merits, applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 109, 112, 114-116, 119-122 and 145-148 are also allowable.

Claims 54 and 123 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Weiss in view of Walker and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,503,146 issued to Walker et al. (Walker et al.). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Claims 54 and 123 are dependent upon allowable claims 39 and 108 respectfully. Therefore, based on the arguments above and based on their own merits, applicants respectfully assert that claims 54 and 123 are also allowable.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the Application, as amended, is now presented in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully solicited.

Applicant believes that no fees are due, however, if any become required, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayments

Applicant: Michael D. Crittenden et al.
Serial No.: 10/661,198
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to Deposit Account 08-2789. Further and favorable reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted

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